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HOMES IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

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Sermons by James Freeman Clarke.

The Five Points of Calvinism and the Five Points of the New Theology.

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The Introduction to the Gospel of John.

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The Scientific Basis of Prayer.

The Meaning and Value of the Lord's Supper at this Time.

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Dorothea L. Dix.

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"Souls already risen with Christ."

Communities Above.

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Why should we go to Church?

Any one who wishes for reading of this kind is invited to write to Miss L. Freeman Clarke, 91 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, Mass.

HOMES IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH.

"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."— EPH. iii. 15.

"In my Father's house are many mansions."— JOHN xiv. 2.

IN these two passages the existence of the family and of the home is spoken of as a fact of universal law, belonging to both worlds, this world and that which is to come. There will be a family in heaven, as there is a family on earth. We shall have homes in heaven, as we have homes here. The essence of the home will be the same, though the circumstance may differ. These families and homes in heaven will correspond to those on earth, though of a higher, deeper, and larger type.

What is the essence of the home? A home is some habitual surrounding, abiding-place,— something into which we can go for rest, peace, safety. We go from our home every day for work, for observation, intercourse with others: we return to it to rest with what is familiar and dear. As man ascends in the scale of development, he does not need a home less, but more. He changes his tent to a hut, his hut to a house, his house of logs or boards for one more permanent, meant to endure, better provided with all things adapted to his tastes and habits and to those of his household. This is a striking fact, that man needs a home more and not less, the more he unfolds his powers, and comes in contact with the universe and with men. The growth of man does not transform him into a homeless being, wandering from place to place, but creates in him a need of a better

home. The home of the savage disappears in a day or a year. The civilized man builds homes which last hundreds of years. This shows that we shall probably need homes hereafter as well as here,—homes more highly developed than these, better adapted to our needs, tastes, and wants. There will be homes in heaven as on earth.

The same thing may be said of the family. As man advances here into a higher civilization, he does not need the family less, but more. The family of the savage is only in its germ. To see the family in its highest state, you must find the highest specimens of the human race. The family becomes more developed as man himself is developed. Each household becomes more united in mutual relations and mutual dependencies. We care more for all the outlying branches of the family, not less; the distant cousins and kinsfolk become dearer to us. This shows that the family, like the home, has a spiritual meaning, a value for eternity as well as for time; something made not only to last, but to unfold into some higher and more spiritual form.

"In my Father's house," says Jesus, "are many mansions." A mansion is a house or outward sphere suited to the inward tendency of the creature. Every creature seeks a mansion adapted to its wants. Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests. Moles burrowing in the ground; ants provident of the future, building their subterranean city with its streets and lanes, its highways and byways; insects on their leaf, spiders in their web, the mollusk in his shell,—all, no doubt, have a sense of security in their many mansions. This instinct of finding or building a mansion seems almost universal. The organ of inhabitiveness rules the whole animal creation.

Man also needs his mansion, and has it. The rudest savage has his hut or cave; the roving Arab pitches his tent day by day in some new environment; at last, men build more enduring edifices, and these become the shelter of the family. The

family and the home are correlated; neither can exist without the other. A house without a family is not a home, a family without a house is hardly a family.

But there are many mansions in our Father's house; many beside those built of stone and wood, brick and marble. The mind needs a mansion of belief in order to feel at home; and it builds for itself a religious, philosophical, moral, or literary creed as naturally as the robin builds its nest. It cannot feel at rest till it has surrounded itself with some gathered and arranged opinions. It is not necessary that all these creeds should be alike. One man's creed may be a provisional one, like the Arab's tent; or a temporary one, like the log cabin of the first settlers in a new country; another may be meant to last for a thousand years, like the palace of a Venetian Doge; but some sort of a spiritual and moral belief one must have before he feels at home.

God has laid the foundation of a spiritual belief in our soul in solid convictions, which we cannot get away from; and he has given us material out of which to construct our belief. The part of our creed which God gives to us is the same in all minds: the part which we make for ourselves is different. All men believe in their identity and personal existence, and in that of an outward world; all men believe in space and time, in infinity and eternity, in cause and effect, in substance and form, in good and evil, in right and wrong. This is the solid foundation which God has himself laid in every man's reason, upon which each man may build more belief as he can. Some religious creeds are better, and some are worse; but a poor creed is better than none, just as a poor house is better than no house. The folly of the sceptic is to have no home of belief at all, because he cannot be sure he has the best one. He chooses to believe nothing until he can be sure about everything. This is as though I should live out of doors because I cannot decide which is the very best kind of house to live in.

The meanest shanty of the poorest laborer keeps out cold and heat and storm, and stands on the solid earth. So the poorest creed is some protection to the soul, and stands on the immutable basis of some everlasting convictions. Better to believe in something divine, if it be only the divine soul in nature, than to have no religious conviction of any kind. Better be a Pantheist than an Atheist; to believe nature to be God rather than not believe at all in God. Better be a Deist than a Pantheist; and so believe in a personal intellect and will in God even if one is not a Christian. All earnest religious convictions protect the soul; and the only creed which is worse than no creed is that which confuses right and wrong, which teaches immoral views of God and man, for that tears up the God-given foundation of the house in order to build the walls. Then, when the rains descend, and the floods arise, and the winds blow, the house has no foundation, and will fall.

But the heart needs its home, too, and the home of the heart is love and friendship. The heart escapes from the selfish world — the world of struggle and competition — into a home of affection, and feels safe. We need some good will which we can depend upon, on which we can lean at all times, in which we can safely trust. And God gives us this essential home of human love. Just as he puts a foundation of belief in every mind, he places a foundation of love in every heart. All men have some fundamental affection. Observe how little children, unless they have been very badly treated, trust in the good will of all around them. Their trust in us compels us to respond to it.

Motherly love surrounds the infant child, and makes a home for its heart. Even the worst mothers love their children, unless their hearts are wholly ulcerated with vice. Even vice itself does not usually destroy a mother's love. That affection lives pure and unspotted in the midst of evil thoughts and emotions. It may have for its companions recklessness, intem-

perance, falsehood; but it often remains uncontaminated in the midst of this bad neighborhood. The poor heart which has sinned away all other power of pure affection can still love its child with unselfish, generous love.

But, when the motherly heart is pure, there is something divine in this affection. See the devotion with which the mother tends the helpless infant, night and day, without rest, endowed with a superhuman strength for this labor. See this love for a sick child, rising out of mere emotion into steady, perpetual, untiring, constant, vigilant activity; suppressing anxiety, remaining calm and firm amid alarming signs, and holding on to the end indefatigable.

Beautiful is the family. It is God's garden, in which he raises his plants. It is beautiful from its unity in variety. The sacred, invisible element of mutual love and confidence makes the serene atmosphere of the whole. It is this various life, various work, but all harmonized by a common aim and love, which makes of a family the germ of a State.

This is the true home for the child's heart,— the thoughtful, tender, wise love of father or mother: into this it runs and is safe.

As the years pass, and the children grow older, they still are always sure of this home. Other loves, which seem more fascinating and fair, may betray them: they are sure that this will never fail. Other friendships may deceive: the wise, steadfast friendship of father and mother, brother and sister, the loves born in home, and grown up and ripened there,— these may have a lesser charm than newer and later affections, but they are sure, they can always be depended on. And when death comes, and takes away the father or mother out of the home, their love remains there, a perpetual possession.

> "The love, where death has set its seal,
> No change can kill, nor rivals steal,
> Nor falsehood disallow."

It now rises transfigured, with an immortal beauty and an undying glory, as a love in heaven, remaining for us there, and making heaven a better and nearer heaven for us.

The Christian Church is necessary as a home for the soul. All the criticisms levelled against it, by foes and friends, are only aimed at its forms, not at its essence. The essence of a Christian church is that "two or three shall meet together in the name of Christ." The essence of its worship is that they "shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." And this need of Christian communion and Christian worship will never pass away. Man needs society in his religious life, his religious thoughts, his religious action, and this makes his church. The more the church is like a family and a home, the nearer it is to its original type. The building of wood or stone is not the church. Jesus and his disciples had no church edifice to worship in; nor did Christians have any for three hundred years. Ritual, ceremony, music, sacraments,— these are not its essence. Its essence is mutual Christian sympathy, thought, and action. The more a church is like a family, and the more its building is like a home, the nearer it comes to its true type.

Such are the homes of earth. There are homes in heaven. There must be a family life in heaven corresponding to that below. Jesus said: "I go to prepare a *place* for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." This does not seem as though the other world consisted of one homogeneous assembly of souls, all in the same place; or of separate souls, each going its own way. Rather it looks as if there were to be families of souls there, each in its home; groups of souls there, drawn together by their different affinities; many mansions there, as there are many mansions here; societies and companies of those of like affinities, like tastes, like convictions and purposes; places prepared beforehand for us, where we shall find wiser, larger, tenderer souls waiting to teach us, to care for us,

just as little children come into homes here where older and wiser persons are ready to receive them. We shall become as "little children" again when we enter that sphere. We shall have motherly and fatherly, brotherly and sisterly spirits to receive us and care for us. These are the intimations of Scripture, the suggestions of reason, the inferences from analogy, and the hopes born out of Christian faith.

The homes in heaven, like the homes on earth, will no doubt contain souls in different degrees of progress. As in our homes here we have the aged, the infant, the child, the youth, and those in mature life, so in the homes hereafter there will be united around a common centre and in one group higher and lower souls,—some old in spiritual wisdom and some child-like in their insight and infantile in their development. Harmony always implies variety. Each celestial group will be a harmony of those in various degrees of progress and attainment,—the angelic teachers and the humbler souls longing to be taught.

In our earthly homes there are often joined together those who have no real union of taste or aim or conviction. But in the heavenly home we may believe that the one bond of union will be a common faith and hope and love, sympathy in the same purpose, longing for the same ends.

I often meet with those or hear of those who are unhappy because they doubt if they are to see again and know again in another world those whom they love here. I have never had any such doubts or fears myself. What sort of an immortality would it be in which we should forget all we knew in this world? And, if we remember anything, what shall we be more likely to remember than that which makes the most important part of our earthly life? To leave behind and drop off all our present knowledge would not be immortality, but the death of our present character and the creation of another being. The law of life is development, not destruction; unfolding of what we

are now into something higher, but not dropping off anything important or leaving it behind.

The apostle tells us that while opinions change, and belief is partial, three things will abide,— Faith, Hope and Love. Faith, which is trust in things unseen, confidence in the infinite, the supreme Good,— this continues through all worlds. Hope, looking forward and upward; aspiration toward the better and the higher; Hope, the spring of progress, the moral power which causes the soul to unfold forever, seeking perpetually a higher good,— this will last through all worlds. But most of all will Love last,— love, which enables us to go out of ourselves and become one with another; love, which is the balance and counterpoise to the loneliness of personal being; love, which mysteriously makes of two souls one. If we did not love others whom we have seen, we could not love God whom we have not seen. Therefore, we may be sure that every genuine affection will abide, and continue the same hereafter as here, and heaven would be no heaven if it destroyed the genuine loves of earth.

I have often noticed that as men grow feeble with age, or draw near to death, while the other faculties become weaker, the affections survive. Memory goes, the power of thought goes,— the strong thinker becomes a child again in his mental processes; the man of energy and will loses his power, his courage: but Love abides. The affections outlast reason, judgment, memory, imagination. A sweetness of ever-growing love draws the dying man nearer to his dear ones. He loves to hold their hands in his, to look into their eyes when he can no longer speak, with a great effort to say, "I love you." His last word, last thought, last look, last touch, is a word, thought, look, touch of love. Does not this show that these affections are to survive death?

When Jesus was about to die, we read that, having loved his own, he loved them even to the end. He gave his last hours and thoughts to these humble friends, to this family of those

most dear to his human heart. For a few hours he dropped the care for his nation, which he loved so much, of the coming kingdom so dear to him, the truth for which he was about to die, and devoted himself to consoling this group of affectionate but ignorant followers. Weak as water, they would soon all forsake him and fly. No matter: he had seen in their souls the seed of an enduring goodness and greatness, and he gave his last hours to care for them. He told them that among the many mansions of his Father's house he was going to prepare a place for them, that where he was they might also be. Think of this, ye doubting, timid hearers, who fear you will be left behind by those you love in the great progress of heavenly life, afraid that you will not be good enough to accompany the friends so dear to you into a higher world. Were the twelve disciples good enough to be with Jesus? Think of the vast gulf which separated their minds and characters from his. But they loved him, and he loved them, and so the gulf was bridged over, and they were to be with him forever.

This shows us what the family in heaven will be. It will not be made up of those who have reached the same level of ascent, but of those of every degree of attainment, who are related to each other by having the same faith, hope, and love. There, as here, there will be those who teach and those who learn; higher and nobler souls descending to help, purify, and sustain weaker hearts; great archangels of intelligence and goodness going down to find the lowliest beings in whom there is a single throb of sincere desire for the beautiful and the true. This divine giving and receiving, blessing and being blessed, will make the home life of heaven.

Nor are we to suppose that the soul hereafter is to be pure spirit, disengaged from all bodily form, going out of time and out of space. The law of continuity does not authorize us to believe in any such sudden leap out of the finite into the infinite, from time to the absence of all time.

All progress is a gradual transition, a gentle ascent, an unfolding of new power. But what an utterly abrupt and inconceivable change would it be to become at once one with the universe, and to pass out of finite relations! No: when we go on and up, we shall in all probability, find ourselves simply a step higher, in a new home, surrounded by old and new friends, with new work to do, new knowledge to acquire, new tastes unfolding, and with a new and higher sense of the divine Presence and the divine Love. There are hours in this life in which we draw very near to God, and in which he becomes to us a real Father and Friend. There, these hours may be permanent and continued: Love an unerring light; Joy its own security; the power of temptation gone; every human affection purified and deepened. Those whom we knew and loved here with a pure and honest love we shall know better and understand better, and we shall be better understood by them. The deep secret of Personality will be partially, but more and more revealed. We shall see others as they are. The inward tenderness and longings for good, so feeble here, we shall recognize as the power of God in their souls. The misunderstandings which make such a tragedy in life will be removed; in that heavenly light, we shall know each other better and more truly. The family will be enlarged, no doubt, and will consist not only of those who have known and loved each other here, but of others, who are in the same sympathies and the same hopes. The heavenly family will be more fully developed than that of earth, yet rudimentally the same.

The apostle tells us that the whole family, in heaven and earth, bears the name of Christ. Jesus introduced a new family tie. All who believe in him belong to a larger family here and hereafter, and he belongs to them all. Thus, as earthly society is made up of groups, and not of individuals, so life in heaven will be of groups and families. The family relation may be intensified and brightened there: special

families may be made up of kindred souls, of those having special affinity for each other, and these again may resolve themselves into larger family groups, till all unite in that universal family of which Christ is the head,— the family of man. Jesus will never be happy as long as one human soul remains outside of his family circle, as long as any race remains outcast. I think there is something very pathetic in the Jews wandering about the earth, insoluble in other races; among them, but not of them; or in the gypsy tribe wandering in the same way from land to land, without home, religion, language, a lost race seeking apparently all over the earth for their home. But in heaven there will be no lost races, no lost churches, no lost and helpless prodigals. All will be brought home into their Father's house,— sooner or later, all. For thus stands the sure word of prophecy proclaiming the omnipotence of the love of Christ, the perfect efficacy of his redeeming grace to break every chain of sin. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." "He shall reign till he hath subdued all enemies under his feet." "Every knee shall bow, in the name of Jesus, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This is the work for Jesus and his angels and saints in heaven; the work in which all the wise and good and pure shall take part with him; the universal redemption of man; a work not to be done in a day or an hour. "In the dispensation of the fulness of times," so we read, "that God our Father might gather together in Christ all things in one, both which are in heaven and are in earth; even in him." "Having made peace through the blood of the cross, through him to reconcile all things unto himself, whether things in earth or things in heaven."